MILITARY CHAPEL, ST. JAMES'S PARK BARRACKS.

A correspondent has supplied us with the foregoing view of the Military Chapel of St. James's Park Barracks. It will provoke the bile in our Gothic fanciers, and at best find but few defenders, yet, after all, this is much the sort of classic art with which the popular mind has been familiarized, and such things are taken as standards whereby to estimate the fitness of the style for English edifices;—as well might the vilest Gothic effusion of Church Commissioner's patronage be taken as a specimen of the true Gothic. After all, however, this Military Chapel is respectable compared with some of the apings of modern imitators in both styles. There is a deal to be done before the merit of designing better things in either style will be based upon a principle. There will be many critics, and few improvers.

THE CATHEDRALS OF THE RHINE.

By its position and by the genius of its inhabitants, the city of Mayence had acquired, even in the earliest times, a political importance of which art has been a faithful expounder. Situated on the left bank of the Rhine, at the spot where the river makes its strongest inclination towards the German territory, peopled by the Celts, fortified by the Romans, honoured and enlarged by the kings of the first two French dynasties, it was once the frontier bulwark of those races to which Providence had confided the government of Western Europe. After having been a mighty fortress, in the hands of the civil power, it became, in the eighth century, a focus of civilization, for St. Boniface, the apostle of the Germans, chose it as the centre of his mission, and obtained for the Church, which he there established, supremacy over all the Teutonic churches. The sovereign empire which religion then assumed in that city may be clearly seen in the cathedral which he there erected.

This great structure presents, not only the most exalted type that has ever been supplied by religious art in Germany, but a succession of all the forms which it has worn. Fire, which has consumed or altered so many Christian monuments, has also, on many occasions, waged a cruel war against it; but the flames have each time respected a fragment of the ancient buildings, and thus there stands a record of all the period of the middle ages. Founded by Archbishop Willigisius, who dedicated a portion of it in 978, the metropolitan church of Mayence was destroyed by fire in 1009, on the night of the very day on which it had been definitively consecrated. By the pious care of the founder it was at once recommenced, and burnt anew in 1081, under the episcopacy of Siegfried I., and again in 1190 under the episcopacy of Conrad von Wittelsbach. The Archbishop Siegfried III. undertook the reconstruction at his accession in 1231, and finished his work in 1239. The existing edifice exhibits most precious vestiges of these three great epochs. The critic may fearlessly attribute to Willigisius and the 10th century the exterior of the eastern apsis; to Siegfried I., and the end of the 11th century, the eastern cupola and the general plan of the nave; to Siegfried III., and the commencement of the 13th century, the western cupola, the apsis that follows, and the accompanying cross. The semicircular arch reigns in these three parts so discrepant; in the first it has all the gravity of Latin art; in the second it takes an oriental costume; in the third it mingles with the richness proper to the schools of Constantinople the first departures from established form that mark the growing influence of ogival art.

The eastern apsis of this building, not less remarkable from its beauty than from its date, is one of the most important specimens of architecture in Western Europe. The tenth century, to which barbarity and barrenness are generally imputed, has exhibited in it knowledge, taste, and elegance, such as might aptly be compared with that choice Latinity which Loup de Ferrière was about the same time teaching in the Abbey of Fulda. The studies of this great community, which had a common origin with the archbishopric of Mayence, and was the seminary of German civilization, had preserved the traditions of ancient architecture in a state of purity, which the invasions of the oriental style soon altered. The apsis, built by Archbishop Willigisius, a rare and decided example of the construction proper to the 10th century, is almost completely Roman; composed entirely of stone, round, bordered by an elegant basement, with one lofty stage of windows, and crowned by a gallery boldly drawn, it bears a roofage, the angle of which, scarcely acute, merges into a pediment that approaches those obtuse forms which the ancients employed in similar places. The two walls, from which it projects, are pierced by the two principal doors of the edifice. That on the left is adorned with columns of which the Corinthian capitals, like the apsis, indicate an epoch still faithful to Roman traditions; the corresponding door on the other side is conceived in a style more barbarous, and belongs, undoubtedly, to the second construction, to the 11th century. Two round towers, destined to contain the staircases, flank the two entries, and rise to a considerable height above the roof. The upper portions of them have not been covered, and are evidently modern; while it is very doubtful whether either has preserved its ancient base.

To follow the progress of time in the order already indicated, let us enter the interior of the church. The two doors open on vestibules, curiously adorned, that, on either side, conduct to the low aisles of the nave, and press the flanks of a cupola that was erected, without any doubt, in the 11th century. The cupola, an octagon resting on a square plane, decorated with drops, naked of mouldings, and accompanied by two lofty tribunes, presents all the characteristics of Byzantine art, the invasion of which ought to follow, at an interval of one hundred years, the development of that beautiful Roman art of the 10th century, which is still impressed on the exterior of the apsis. For the rest, while it preserves internally the semicircular line in all its purity, it has been covered externally, and in modern times, by a large gallery, which forms, so to say, its second story, and is lighted by lofty pointed windows, surmounted by pediments. The vase, which is to be seen beneath the cupola; the lateral inclosures which keep it isolated from the rest of the church, lead to the conclusion that it was the baptistery.

At the western extremity of the nave, which reposes on square pillars, and is accompanied by low aisles the vaults of which are without mouldings, another cupola has been suspended above the cross, and the choir, adorned with three apses, has been projected behind the cupola. The complex plan of this mass of building evidently belongs to the 13th century; the actual construction has taken place at different epochs. The interior of the dome is like that of Cologne, and shows the pointed arch taking the place of the semicircular wherever it is necessary that pressure too violent should be reduced,—in the vaults, for example, and in the arches which sustain the buttresses. The two extremities of the transept are square, but the three apses diverging from the choir nave a polygonal form, which, consequently, indicates a subsequent epoch.

The exterior of this part of the cathedral is even more diversified than the interior. We shall say nothing about the three pediments of the choir, the three polygonal apses that lean against the pediments, the two octagonal turrets that are raised on the common axis of the apses, and add their heads to those which, the two towers of the eastern front and the two domes, rear towards heaven. There are three portions, deserving of special consideration, that belong to the period in which the Byzantine style had obtained its greatest extension in Germany: the first is the belfry of the western dome, the base of which is decorated with a splendour altogether Oriental, supports a sort of octagonal tower, truncated and adorned with pointed arches from a hand of the 15th century; the second is the wall that closes the southern arm of the transept, and is pierced by three stories of arches, the lines of which are multiplied and intertwine with luxuriance; the third is the frontispiece of the opposite arm, in which the round form seems to have received the utmost subtilties of ornament short of self-abdication. It was this degree of maturity that architecture founded on the curve line attained, before it gave place to ogival art. It reached this extreme point in the course of the 13th century, in the reign of the emperor Frederick II. The accession of the house of Habsburg, which was unexpected, was accompanied by an era of disorder and barbarity, and followed by a revolution that naturalized the pointed arch among the Germans. In one of the side chapels that are built in the aisles of the Cathedral of Mayence one can see how far the Teutonic architects have pushed this new principle of art; the small columns that support the pointed arches of the vault are fashioned in the shape of shrubs, the slender stalks of which are adorned with fully-developed leaves. The excessive complexity which the German genius introduces into all the forms which it touches is there plainly seen in one and the same monument, under aspects the most different.

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